TRACER

McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

AN ILLINOIS CORPORATION (not for profit)

6422 Main Street, Union, Illinois 60180

Telephone: 815-923-2267

Prepared by: Gwendolyn Danner, Lucille Maguire, Thresile Mulvenna.

VOLUME IV - No. 2 Newsletter AUTUMN, 1977

NICE THINGS

A great many things have been happening at your museum, most of them nice. We never have a complete list of all the things that are given to the museum, nor a complete list of all the nice things that are done for the museum and the historical society. But perhaps a mention of some things may remind other people of donations they intend making. The accessioning committee has worked very hard getting tags onto items that will not only tell what they are and who donated them and when, but frequently some little story.

One of these items was an oil can with a big long spout that had been used by the Williams family on their threshing rig from 1903 to 1915 (the dates are approximate). "Pat" Williams, who is a director of McHenry County Historical Society, took the oil can to the slave sale at Huntley and when he gave it to be sold, suggested that the buyer really should donate it to the society. It was sold to Elmer Britton for more than fifty dollars, and Mr. Britton did donate it to the museum.

An earlier gift was a copy of "The New Era", once published every Thursday at Woodstock. Wm. D. Ringland was the editor and proprietor, and a subscription cost $1.50 per year. This copy the museum now has is dated June 22, 1876, consisted of four pages and was No. 30 of Volume III. Mrs. Fred Charles presented it to the museum.

The Harvard High School Band sent one of their records, played by the state first place winning band, to the museum with the directors from Harvard one meeting night. Could we suggest similar donations from other schools within the county would be very welcome?

Not an item to be accessioned but much appreciated was a donation of shelving and a peg board made by Charles Hessler of Woodstock.

GUESTS AT BOARD MEETINGS

Almost every meeting of the board finds guests present. They are always very welcome, and are usually members of the society who are quite interested in the work of the organization. Recently we had other guests at two meetings. Steven Aradas, associated with the County Planning Commission, attended the August meeting. He reported on what he knew of historic preservation in the East, his former home, and said he would be willing to aid our museum in any way he could through the Planning Commission, even to entertaining an idea for adding a preservation planner to that body when it becomes economically feasible.

In September our guests were from the County Board's financial committee and numbered three: Phyllis Walters, Dean Marlow and Ron Morris. Our treasurer, Ruth Cripe, had appeared before the board requesting funds for the museum, answering most of the questions they had asked, and "filing the rest in her mind", she took them home and typed the replies she had needed to look up. The members from the financial committee explained what they needed most was a copy of our actual expenditures and income for the present year and a projection for the coming year. Since the final budget meeting of the county board was September 29, Don Hildebrand assisted Mrs. Cripe in preparing this for presentation. At the October meeting we were told that the museum had been included in the county's budget. When Ron Morris departed the September meeting, he left a cash donation.

CHANGES, IN THIS QUARTER AND PROJECTED

There has been a change in caretakers at the museum. The Joseph Streits were a young couple, saving toward buying a home of their own. They moved out the first of October and one of the several couples interviewed by President Dorothy McEachren and other board members, Mr. and Mrs. William Bailey, moved in. Unfortunately, Mr. Bailey has been hospitalized since then but it is hoped he will soon be okay. Meanwhile his wife has been assuming his responsibilities.

At the September meeting, it was voted to begin Daytime meetings for the board for the winter months in November. The first of these daytime meetings will be on November twentieth. We will so continue through January (there is no meeting in December), February, March and April.

It was also decided that when the museum re-opens to the general public in May, 1978, admittance will have to be charged. We have had too many "non-donors" and few so generous that they made up for these "Non-donors". So next year admittance will be one dollar for the ordinary adult, fifty cents for senior citizens, a quarter for children, and ten cents each for the members of school, scout and similar groups. Members, of course, are free if they present their membership cards.

Also at the September meeting Dorothy McEachren announced she did not intend to accept the presidency of the society again. She furnished a letter to the secretary which was published with the directors' minutes, concerning what she has done and what is still needed for the museum and for the society to remain viable. She was absent from the October meeting, away on a trip of which we hope she will give us an account for the next Tracer. In her absence, the directors agreed that the society MUST prepare to hire a paid curator for the museum. Dorothy McEachren has not only been the president of the society, she has acted as curator of the museum on a volunteer basis putting in hours that only her love for the undertaking could make acceptable. It is obvious that she is irreplaceable, but if the society is to continue, a substitute must be found and several possible avenues of approach will be investigated.

Beginning in June, the museum has been so fortunate as to have office help from CETA, not steadily, but enough to make us thankful. All the volunteer that is offered is really appreciated, too. Mrs. McEachren would like to mention that the loss of Lucinda Velasquez was a definite cause for sorrow.

SAD STORY

It does seem to bad that even our historical society paper should have such an item, but we must publish bad news as well as good that pertains to the organization. During the County Fair, the log cabin was broken into. Fortunately, none of the artifacts were taken but a hasp on the door was broken. Evidently the thief, or thieves, hoped to find the jar of donations.

PLEAS FOR HELP

Is anyone keeping scrapbooks of the servicemen who served in Korea and Viet Nam? The museum does have several scrapbooks of servicemen of World War I and World War II, but nothing of these later actions. Harvard area men are listed in the Greater Harvard Area Book.

We do not have a copy of the Harvard history and business directory issued in 1912, and would greatly welcome one.

We still need a typewriter with large type, preferably in working condition or easily restorable. This would be a working machine for use in the museum. If anyone has one just collecting dust, why not donate it to the museum?

This is a request for some verbal help. Will the person who donated the wigs and the electric insulators please inform the museum staff who they are? The items were left in the office when its occupants were elsewhere in the building, and they cannot be properly accessioned until the donor is known. Also, he--or she!--deserves a thank you.

In our pleas we would like to include a note of thanks for a Mr. Tappan who visited the office to report that the picture of the wreck shown on the second issue of volume III, Winter 1977, was one that happened in Woodstock at the Church Street Crossing. Now if someone can tell us when it happened.

Repetition of some previously mentioned articles may keep them from being disposed of elsewhere: Business cards, current and contemporary as well as old; Present day clothing--men's and boys', women's and girls' and baby's. One does not think of donating these items to a historical museum but they are a part of life, and a part that often changes quite rapidly. The lady that wore the little black bonnet in 1867 that is so attractive to so many people who see it now in the costume room would never have thought it would one day be in such a place.

PROGRAMS

It was suggested at a recent board meeting that planned programs for the Sunday afternoons the museum is open through the summer might attract more people to the museum. As you probably know, there are a great many people in the county-some of them members!-who have not been in the museum in a long, long time. They intend to come but it is one of those things that can be done any time and so is continually postponed. If they can see spinning, weaving, grape and apple pressing, other actual old time skills, they might get around to it. The schedule is not yet complete, but at present, Henry Marlowe and Pat Williams plan to start the ball rolling on the seventh of May, although they have not yet stated what their program will be. Nancy Fike will take the next Sunday, Don Hildebrand the twenty-first and Alice and Frances Bailey the twenty-eighty of May. Leta and Alice Clark will be in charge on the fourth of June. The next Sunday is the annual meeting and Ann Rademaker will take the twenty-fifth. After that scheduled Sundays are still rather hit-and-miss but we expect to print a formal list in the Winter Tracer.

HARVARD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

An outgrowth of Greater Harvard Area Book and the committee which worked on it has been thought of a local society. A meeting earlier in the fall resulted in a board of directors being chosen and in October officers were elected. These were Professor Robert McCluggage, president, Gwendolyn Danner, vice-president; James Finke, treasurer and Vivian Jaworski, secretary with Carrie LeFew as curator. While there are no immediate plans or thoughts of a museum, a local society can play a very large part in educating the public, in collecting the stories of senior citizens, in finding and marking older buildings, in protecting sites that have some local historical significance.

During the Bicentennial it was learned that many Harvardites have long been saving and collecting items for and from their own families. Several of those attending the first meeting, brought some of these articles with them and a small exhibit was arranged. Quarterly meetings are planned with either similar small exhibitions or special speakers.

NOTES FROM OTHERS

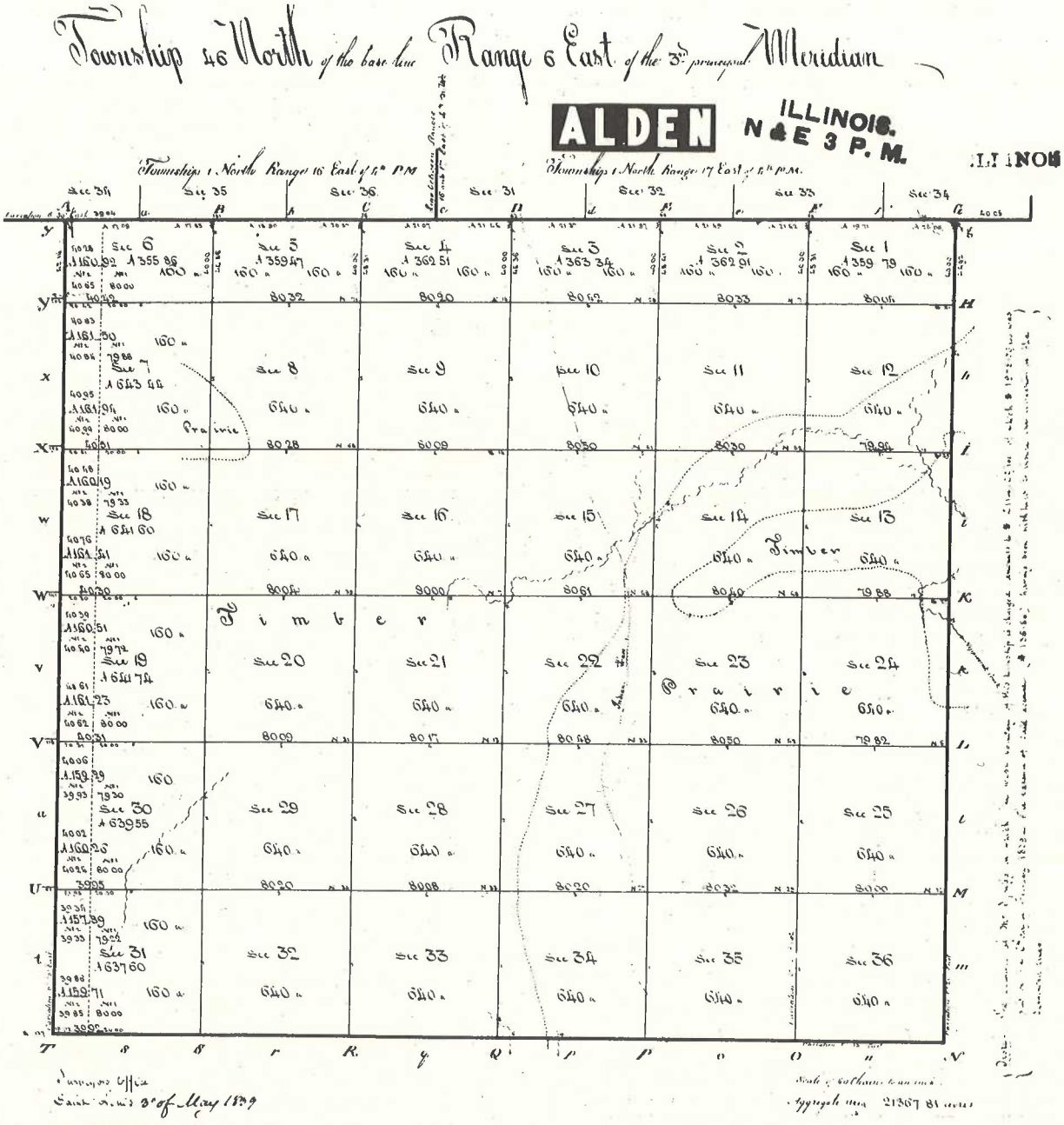
A letter from Dorothy McEachren before she left on vacation told us that she had accompanied Richard Crabb and Kendall White to the Big Foot cemetery, and that there they had been successful in finding the Fish headstone. Your editor, Mrs. McEachren and Mr. Crabb had spent an afternoon hunting it earlier with no success. This time Mr. White had a marking pencil with him to outline the letters on the stone and Mr. Crabb was able to get pictures.

Mrs. Fish was a Big Foot resident who had lived in three centuries. She was born in 1799 in Massachusetts, and she and her husband were the first family to settle in Big Foot. She told later that it was very lonely on the prairie and mentioned that the first thing she and her husband did upon arising each morning was to look all around the horizon to see if they could see any signs of smoke to indicate that another family had arrived in the area. When her husband had to go to Kenosha for supplies--that was much nearer than Chicago--the trip was made in the same wagon that, covered, had brought them from the east. Pulled by oxen, it took Mr. Fish three or four days to complete the trip and Mrs. Fish--her name was Asenath--was so lonely that she used to drive the two pigs into the "lean-to" of the log house for company. They were the only other living creatures about that were not wild!

Other settlers would come in the 1830s, and as an older lady, she was known to the whole settlement as "Aunt Cenie". Born in the administration of President John Adams, she lived through the times of twenty-three executives. McKinley was in office when she died.

Both the 1968 County History, and The Crackerbarrel, the Elgin Historical Society paper, have told the story of when Mrs. Fish stopped smoking. We are not accustomed to thinking of ladies from Massachusetts smoking cob pipes but she had "all her life". When she was ninety-five, she went to California, by train, of course. On the journey, she lit her pipe and was told by the conductor that if she wished to smoke, she must go into the smoking car. Whether she even went to look in that car is no longer known, but she knew that it was filled with men, and she was very angry that the conductor would try to send her to join them. She refused to do so and threw her pipe away, never again smoking. There are still people at Big Foot whose parents knew her, and some even remembered her husband, Jonathan, who died in 1881 when he was eighty-six.

THIS COPY OF MAP AS FIRST SURVEYED BY THE U.S. GOVERNMENT BEFORE ANY OF THE LAND HAD BEEN SOLD.



SURVEYORS OFFICE
Saint Louis, 3rd of May 1839

The above plan of Township 46 north of the base line, range 6 east of the 3rd principal meridan, is strictly conformable to the field notes of the survey thereof on file in this office, which have been examined and approved. - The north boundary (5 miles 78.99 chains) was surveyed in 1832 and 1833 by Lucius Lyon, commissioner on the part of the United States, as certified to this office on the 6th of August - 1833 by M. T. Williams, Surveyor General of the United States for Ohio, Indiana and Michigan; - the said boundary being a part of the line between Illinois and Michigan, now Wisconsin; - The west boundary (5 miles 42.14 chains) was surveyed by Ignatius Sprigg in the 2nd quarter of 1837, under contract signed by the Surveyor General on the 21st of November and by the said Sprigg on the 15th of December 1836; - the said boundary was paid for and the content noted in the margin in the first quarter of 1839, and charged in the account of the Surveyor General for that quarter voucher No. 2. The south boundary (5 miles 79.92 chains) - and the east boundary (5 miles 44.92 chains) were surveyed in the 2nd quarter of 1837 - and the subdivision lines (57 miles 72.65 chains) were surveyed in the 3rd quarter of 1837, by James Thompson, under contract signed by the Surveyor General on the 25th of November 1838, and by the said Thompson on the 15th of December of the same year - The surveys by Thompson were paid for in the first quarter of 1839, and were charged in the account of the Surveyor General for that quarter - (Voucher No. 6).

WILLIAM MILBUM
Surveyor General

ALGONQUIN

A century ago, Algonquin was the leading town in business in the township of the same name. The town did not start out with that name. Its first settler was Dr. Andrew B. Cornish, and for his own convenience and that of those people who wished to cross the Fox River near him. he installed a ferry service, and naturally, everyone designated this site as "Cornish's Ferry". When numerous other families had also settled nearby, and a formal government was to be established, it was decided to call the town, "Osceola". However when they applied for state recognition, it was only to find that Illinois already had a town with that name. Living in Algonquin at that time was a man named Edwards who seems to have been a very "large frog in the small pool" that was their village. He owned a boat with the title of Algonquin, and when he suggested they name the town the same, his fellow citizens accepted it.

This was the second settlement in the township, Crystal Lake having preceded it by a matter of months or a year, according to the 1877 Directory, since Crystal Lake is said to have started in 1836 and Algonquin in 1836 or 1837. However, the post office at the latter town was the first in the township, and Dr. Cornish was the postmaster. Another early convenience in the village was the hotel, of which there is a good deal known. It began, in 1840, as a log structure of quite moderate dimensions. In 1850, William Powell, who had been the owner from the beginning, added a frame part which was used for eight years. At that time, James Dixon and John Gillilan tore it down and replaced it with a more modern structure. Later it was sold several times and became known as the Pingry Hotel, which was well and widely known as a summer resort.

Like most towns in the county, churches were some of the first public buildings established. St. John's Protestant Episcopal church was organized in 1844. The Reverend Peter Arvidson had settled in the village in 1842 and he was the organizer with the aid of Dr. Warden. The Congregationalist society was formed in 1850 at the home of A. Dodd. The first members were Ambrose Dodd, Mr. and Mrs. James Humes, Mrs. Allen Kerns, Mr. and Mrs. John Van Buren, Mr. and Mrs. Horace Wells, Mr. and Mrs. Wright Warren, Mrs. Abigail Smock, and Mrs. Jane Foster. The minister was the Reverend I.C. Beach.

Outside of farming, mills were always among the earliest businesses, and here on the Fox was power in plentitude. An "A. Dawson" built a sawmill at Algonquin in 1842, and began a grist mill. By the time the County Directory was published in 1876, the sawmills had outlived their usefullness and been abondoned. But the gristmill that Dawson had started was finished in 1849 by Henry Petrie. Another was built by Dr. Thomas Plumleigh in 1850, a brick mill that was said to have cost twelve thousand dollars. In the 1870s, they had changed hands but were still prosperous businesses.

At that time--the 1870s--Algonquin also boasted a butter and cheese factory, daily producing about seventy-five pounds of butter and five hundred pounds of cheese. Besides this, some five hundred eightyfour thousand gallons of milk were sent to Chicago annually.

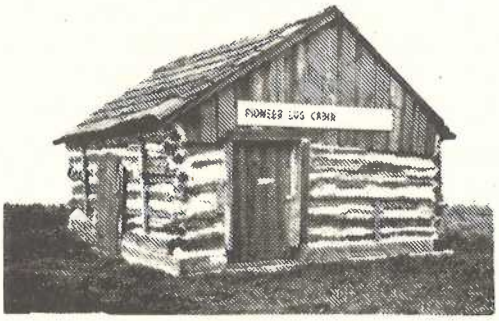
In 1876, the following businesses were included in the Directory: three mills, Algonquin River Mills with G.M. Peacock, proprietor; G.D. Jayne; and Harvey and Marshall; one carriage manufacturer, Joseph Adamed, one blacksmith and wagon maker, A. Hamilton, and Joseph Adamek, harness maker; David Weaver was proprietor of the hotel; J. Snook and C.E. Williams were butchers; F. Tomisky, Chapell and Ferguson, Helm, John and Peter were general merchants; Thomas Evenson was the town's shoemaker; C.C. Chunn dealt in drugs, medicines, perfumes and fancy articles; and W.A. Mason, B.B. Bentley, and William Harback were doctors.

This was a larger group of business men than listed their addresses at the senior settlement of the township.

In the last issue of the Tracer, we listed two other residents of Algonquin who had unusual occupations. Miss Phoebe Dunn who taught school through the winter months in the summer traveled with Ringling Brothers' Circus. She weighed five hundred pounds. At the same time, Colonel Ruth Goshen, a gentleman seven feet tall, who also traveled with the circus, and was connected with the Woods Museum in Chicago, made his home in Algonquin where he had a home built with ceilings and doorways that would be comfortable for his height.

IF YOUR ADDRESS IS INCORRECT,
WON'T YOU MAIL US A CARD?

McHENRY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
BOX 434 • 6422 MAIN STREET •
UNION, ILLINOIS 60180



Not-For-Profit Corporation
U. S. Postage
PAID
Union, Illinois 60180
Permit No. 9